

Spring ~ April 21, 2006

“There’s a school in every garden.” I’ve reversed the title of the Department of Education’s “A Garden in Every School Initiative” to emphasize that lessons can be learned during agricultural activities in any school setting. That realization is something which has motivated me for years. Children witness the developmental processes of life and reap the rewards of honest effort in these gardens. Students and teachers at Los Cerritos Elementary in Long Beach are proving just that, as active stewards of the land in their award-winning urban garden. I’ve seen firsthand how gardens such as theirs promote agricultural awareness, good nutrition, physical activity, social development and community involvement. This is truly thinking “outside the (lunch) box!”

<http://www.lbusd.k12.ca.us/loscerr/index.html>

Continuing our healthy choices partnership, CDFA is one of several state agencies, along with private companies, educational institutions and nonprofit organizations, that helped create the California School Garden Network (CSGN). This is a one-stop-shop for teachers seeking information about establishing, funding and maintaining school gardens. The number of school garden resources available to California teachers is bountiful. CSGN is the first organization to consolidate all those resources in one location, giving teachers easy access to the tools they need to grow and sustain successful school gardens. <http://www.csgn.org/index.php>



Secretary Kawamura talks with urban grade school gardeners at Los Cerritos Elementary School in Long Beach. photo: j. henderson/ cdfa

Governor Schwarzenegger and I recognize that healthy citizens are part of the core infrastructure of this state. The Governor signed into law the Fruit and Vegetable School Breakfast program (S.B. 281) that makes \$18 million in funding available toward the purchase of nutritious California-grown fruits and vegetables. Our department hosted a workshop this month with representatives of cooperating government and private groups to help educate farmers, packers and processors on how to sell directly to schools and co-ops.

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/pa/pressreleases/PressRelease.asp?PRnum=019>

We were pleased to have Governor Schwarzenegger and members of the legislature participate in Ag Day '06 at the Capitol. CDFA, in collaboration with California Women in Agriculture, hosted the event. <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/pa/AgDay06.htm> This year the artistic talents of California’s school children, grades 1 thru 8, were on display. Schools throughout the state participated in an art contest that honored California’s agricultural products. The theme “Creating Healthy Choices” spotlighted statewide school garden programs, created to promote healthy choices in nutrition and wellness, especially among school-age children. The celebration featured more than 35 booths distributing samples of California’s wonderful agricultural commodities.

Speaking of commodities, the much-anticipated 2005 edition of the **California Agricultural Resource Directory 2005** has now been released, both as a print and an online document. http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/card/card_new04.htm This directory offers comprehensive crop statistics for 2004, the most recent year of complete production information. I hope you will use this directory to learn more about the impressive performance of California agriculture, and to discover some of the stories about the crops, technologies, and especially the men and women who provide your food, fiber and shelter.



On a more serious subject, preparations continue to combat emerging agricultural pest and disease threats to California. I presented information last month at Governor Schwarzenegger's Pandemic Flu Summit in Los Angeles and emphasized the successful eradication methods used by CDFA, USDA and partner agencies against the recent exotic Newcastle disease outbreak. A cooperative avian health unit remains active in the state, and we are testing live birds where they are sold to quickly detect any outbreak of flu. Remember to visit CDFA's "Bird Flu Breaking News" Web page for updates and links to information on this disease. <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/pa/birdflu/>

In my next update, I'll be discussing some challenges and opportunities for California agriculture that may result from global climate change. As always, thank you for your support and don't hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

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At the Capitol, Secretary Kawamura answers a network news reporter's questions during Ag Day preparations.
photo: j. van rein/ cdfa

The year 2004 was a notable one for California's agricultural industry. Cash receipts from farm marketings rose 10% to a new record high of \$31.8 billion. As the nation's No. 1 agricultural producer, the Golden State's cash receipts represented 13.2% of the U.S. total and were more than Texas and Iowa (the 2nd and 3rd leading states) combined. The commodities contributing most to the increase in 2004 were milk, almonds and grapes. California's agricultural abundance includes 350 different crops. Among those, the state grows more than half of the nation's total of fruits, nuts and vegetables. Many of these commodities are solely produced in California.